

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3845

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO CALCUTTA & MADRAS FROM
BOMBAY FEB 5, 1976 REPEATED FOR YOU

QUOTE

BOMBAY 0297

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN GUJARAT

REF: BOMBAY 0259

1. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE MRS. GANDHI WOULD PROBABLY PREFER THE
FALL OF THE FRONT AND THE FORMATION OF A CONGRESS (R) GOVERNMENT,
BUT REPORTS REACHING US FROM GUJARAT SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE NUMBER
OF KMLP AND CONGRESS (O) DEPUTIES WHO WOULD SUPPORT A CONGRESS (R)
GOVERNMENT IS SO UNCERTAIN AND SO UNRELIABLE THAT FORMATION OF A
CONGRESS (R) GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. SOME OF THE
KMLP DEFECTORS AND SOME OF THE CONGRESS (O) DEPUTIES UNHAPPY
WITH COOPERATION WITH THE JANA SANGH COULD DECIDE TO
LEAVE THE FRONT BUT SIT AS INDEPENDENTS RATHER THAN GOING OVER
TO CONGRESS (R), REDUCING THE FRONT TO A MINORITY WHILE GIVING
NO MAJORITY TO CONGRESS (R). ADDITIONALLY, THE GROWING GUJARATI
DISTASTE FOR POLITICAL DEFECTION IS BEING OFFERED AS A MAJOR
REASON WHY CONGRESS (R) WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT,
EVEN IF THE FRONT FALLS. THE STATE WOULD THUS BE FACED WITH A
COMPLETE STALEMATE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE VIRTUALLY
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IMPOSSIBLE.

2. IF THESE DEVELOPMENTS EVENTUATE, MRS. GANDHI MIGHT HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO IMPOSE PRESIDENTIAL RULE FOR SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR AND THEN HOLD NEW STATE ELECTIONS. CONGRESS (R)'S VICTORY IN THE GUJARAT PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS AND HITENDRA DESAI'S APPARENT CONFIDENCE IN THE PARTY'S POSITION IN THE STATE MIGHT COMBINE WITH HER DESIRE TO CLOSE DOWN THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF DISSIDENCE IN THE COUNTRY TO MOVE HER TOWARD PRESIDENTIAL RULE AND ELECTIONS. THE DATE FOR STATE ELECTIONS BEING BANDIED ABOUT HERE IS FEBRUARY, 1977.

3. FREE PRESS JOURNAL EDITOR C.S. PANDIT'S FEBRUARY 5 SIGNED ARTICLE ENDS WITH THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATIONS: QUOTE EVEN IF THE ANATA FRONT GOVERNMENT FALLS SOON AFTER THE ASSEMBLY MEETS ON FEBRUARY 9, THERE WILL BE NO EFFORT BY THE CONGRESS PARTY, WHICH IS THE NEXT LARGEST GROUP, TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. IN THAT EVENTUALITY THE STATE WILL AGAIN COME UNDER PRESIDENT'S RULE. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR IF THE STATE ASSEMBLY WILL BE IMMEDIATELY DOSSOLVED OR NOT. BUT ULTIMATELY THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE FROM A FRESH ELECTION SINCE NO SINGLE PARTY ENJOYS A CLEAR MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY AND THERE IS POPULAR RESISTANCE IN GUJARAT TO FORM GOVERNMENTS WITH THE HELP OF DEFECTORS. UNQUOTE. (COMPLETE TEXT TELEXED TO POL/KREISBERG.) THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL HAS HAD EXCELLENT REPORTING FROM GUJARAT AND PANDIT HIMSELF IS A WELL-RESPECTED POLITICAL OBSERVER.N

4. AS A FINAL NOTE ON THE GUJARAT SCENE, WE HAVE HEARD FROM TWO LOCAL SOURCES, BOTH GENERALLY GOOD, THAT HITENDRA DESAI WILL JOIN THE CENTRAL CABINET, PROBABLY AS HOME MINISTER. SIGNED COURTNEY UNQUOTE SAXBE

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